A fresh look at Chota Valley Spanish: An Afro-Hispanic dialect of Northern Ecuador

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Abstract

The present paper provides a grammatical description of Chota Valley Spanish (CVS), an Afro-Hispanic dialect spoken in the provinces of Imbabura and Carchi, Northern Ecuador. It builds on previous dialectological analyses (Lipski 1982, 1986, 1987, 2008, 2010; Schwegler 1999) and complements them with new linguistic data. In doing so, this study also wants to stress the importance of conducting further research on Afro-Hispanic dialects since their grammars, origins, and evolutions are still for the most part under-studied.

Keywords: Chota Valley Spanish, Afro-Hispanic languages, creole studies.
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1 Introduction

Over the last few decades, the study of Afro-Hispanic contact languages has grown substantially. In fact, while in the past, traditional dialectologists and philologists did not pay much attention to these language varieties; nowadays, there are many active researchers working on the analysis of several grammatical aspects of these intriguing vernaculars.

From a linguistic perspective, Afro-Hispanic contact languages do not diverge radically from Spanish. Nevertheless, they are rich in constructions which would be considered ungrammatical in the standard language. For this reason, a close comparative investigation of their grammars could provide the perfect microparametric laboratory, thus leading to testing syntactic hypotheses, which usually have been developed on data proceeding from standard languages (cf. Kayne 1996; Sessarego 2012). From a historical point of view, an analysis of Afro-Hispanic grammars can offer valuable insights into the social conditions that might have characterized black lives in Spanish America during colonial time.

Along these lines of reasoning, the current paper will focus on one of these Afro-Hispanic vernaculars: Chota Valley Spanish (CVS), a Spanish dialect spoken in the provinces of Imbabura and Carchi, Northern Ecuador. The main goal of this study is to offer an updated linguistic description of CVS by providing new data on different grammatical aspects of this language (i.e., phonetics and phonology; morphosyntax; lexicon). In doing so, this paper also wants to stress the importance of conducting further research on Afro-Hispanic dialects since their grammars, origins, and evolutions are still for the most part under-studied.

The present article is organized into five sections. Section 2 briefly summarizes previous studies on CVS; section 3 offers a description of this language by providing data collected in Chota Valley (winter 2011-2012); section 4 provides a discussion of such data. Finally, section 5 summarizes and concludes.

2 Previous studies on Chota Valley Spanish

Not many linguists have worked on CVS. Nevertheless, from their publications, an intriguing debate has emerged on the origin and evolution of this language. The first linguistic studies providing a description of CVS grammar were carried out by Lipski in the 80's (Lipski 1982, 1986, 1987). In these articles, the author offers an account of the main phonetic, morphosyntactic and lexical aspects that differentiate CVS from the surrounding Ecuadorian Spanish dialects. Two decades later, Lipski (2008, 2010) goes on to analyze how more recent cultural awareness has led to processes of linguistic revitalization and how several sociolinguistic factors play a role in regulating variable plural marking across the Choteño Determiner Phrase (DP). In all these studies, Lipski describes a variety of linguistic phenomena. Even though the author acknowledges that some of them might be seen as «left over from a time when Afro-Ecuadorians were in effect speaking a second language variety of Spanish», he does not make

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any definitive claim on the origin of CVS and on the sociohistorical scenario in which this language evolved.

Conversely, Schwegler (1999) and McWhorter (2000) have suggested that the social conditions generally assumed to have led to creole formation in many other parts of the Americas were in place in colonial Chota Valley. According to these authors, blacks vastly outnumbered whites and the introduction of African-born workforce was massive and abrupt (cf. Schwegler 1999, 240; McWhorter 2000, 10–11). Nevertheless, contemporary CVS only displays some phonological and morphological reductions, African lexical borrowings, and some other traces of second language acquisition strategies, but it does not show the radical grammatical restructuring typically found in creole languages. Schwegler (1999) claims that this variety —which probably in colonial time used to look like Palenquero[1]— went through decreolization in more recent years due to contact with regional Spanish. For this reason, only few vestigial features of such a creole speech would be left in this vernacular today. The most important grammatical element that would link CVS to Palenquero is the presence of the pronoun *ele* —'3rd person singular/plural (genderless)', which is found in both languages (see (1) and (2) from Schwegler 1999, 237).

(1) Palenquero (Colombia):

a. ELE a-ta kumé ku ELE.
'HE/SHE/IT is eating with HIM/HER.'

b. ELE tan miní akí.
'They will come here.' (Archaic)

(2) Chota (highland Ecuador):

a. ELE, él ta allí.
'HE/SHE is there.'

b. ¡Yo! con ELE no fuera.
'I! Whit HIM/HER/IT I would not go.'

c. ELE no les quiero dar.
'I don't want to give it to HIM/HER/IT.'

Schwegler (1999, 250) shows on phonetic bases that plural *ele* in Palenquero and CVS cannot possibly have been derived from Spanish *ellos* 'they-(masculine.plural)' and *ellas* 'they-(feminine.plural)', but rather from Portuguese *eles* 'they-(masculine.plural)'. For this reason and since pronouns are considered «deep linguistic features» —hardly borrowable—, the author suggests that both languages derived from a common Afro-Portuguese creole language, which possibly developed on the Western African coasts through the contact of Portuguese slave traders and local African groups. In the author's view, this hypothesis is backed by the fact that Portuguese never settled the Caribbean in large enough numbers as to transfer «deep features» of their language to the

[1] Palanquero is a creole language spoken in the village of San Basilio de Palenque (Colombia). See Schwegler (1996) for a detailed account.

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local dialects. Consequently, the traces of Portuguese features in the Caribbean would be due to the previous existence of such an Afro-Lusitanian contact variety. Therefore, Schwegler suggests that CVS used to be a Portuguese-based creole imported and/or created in Chota Valley. Over time, it decreolized and gradually approximated to Spanish. Due to these reasons, a creole language is not currently spoken in this area. Instead, we can find a dialect of Spanish characterized by some morphological simplifications, phonological reductions, and certain African lexical borrowings.

On the other hand, McWhorter (2000) suggests that the sociodemographic conditions for a creole to emerge were in place in colonial Chota Valley; however, the reason why CVS is not a creole does not have to do with decreolization, but rather with the fact that Spain did not have a permanent slave trading station in Africa. As Spaniards were not active slave traders, a Spanish-based pidgin never developed on the Western African coast. As a result, this language could not possibly be introduced into Latin American plantations and become a full-fledged creole (Afrogenesis Hypothesis). In McWhorter's terms, CVS would be a 'missing Spanish creole', one of the Spanish dialects proving that traditionally-accepted models of transatlantic creole genesis are wrong (e.g., the *société d'habitation* model, cf. Chaudenson 2001). In fact, according to McWhorter, given the extreme sociohistorical scenario characterizing colonial Chota Valley, if we believe these models, a creole language should theoretically be there, but in practice it is missing.

Several authors found McWhorter's Afrogenesis Hypothesis to not be feasible from a sociohistorical perspective (cf. Schwegler 2002; Díaz-Campos & Clements 2005, 2008; Lipski 2000, 2005). In particular, Lipski (2005, 283) has argued that there is no clear reason why a pidgin language would develop exclusively in Western Africa but not in any of the plantation settings described by McWhorter (e.g. colonial Chota Valley —cf. McWhorter 2000, 10–11).

Sessarego (2011a) provides a sociohistorical analysis of the evolution of slavery in Chota Valley. His findings suggest that the introduction of slaves into the region happened gradually, blacks were mainly locally-born, and the managerial practices implemented by the Jesuits (e.g., indoctrination, creation of nuclear families, support of slave reproduction and self-maintenance) might have favored Spanish language acquisition by the enslaved population. The author suggests that the black population had relatively good access to Spanish and could probably speak a good approximation to it. For this reason, CVS should neither be seen as a decreolizing language, nor as a missing creole, but rather as a crystallized second language variety of Spanish which did not go through any phase of (de)creolization.

3 A linguistic account of CVS

The data presented in this article were collected in Chota Valley in the winter of 2011–2012. Fifty-four informants took part in this research. All of them were born and raised in the region. The communities visited during this field-

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work were Tumbabiro, Carpuela, Chota, Santiago, Chalguayacu, Chamanal, Concepción, Caldera and Cuajara.

The data were collected by recurring to grammaticality judgments and sociolinguistic interviews. These two methodologies were adopted because they are considered to be in reciprocal complementation and therefore well-suited for the current research. If on one hand, grammaticality judgments can shed light on the abstract grammatical intuitions of the speaker, on the other hand, only a comparison of such information with empirical data can help us build a robust, fine-grained generalization. Moreover, as pointed out by Cornips & Poletto (2005), grammaticality judgments results are at least in part influenced by the prescriptive notions held by the informants. Therefore, it is particularly important to rely also on naturalistic data when investigating socially stigmatized dialects like Chota Valley Spanish.

3.1 Phonetics and Phonology

This section offers a description of the main phonetic and phonological features encountered in Chota Valley Spanish (CVS). This dialect is spoken in the Ecuadorian highlands and, as a consequence, it presents some linguistic features typical of this region. Additionally, it also shows patterns that are not found in the surrounding Spanish dialects but that can be widely encountered in other Afro-Hispanic vernaculars spoken in the Americas.

Rising of unstressed mid vowels: In line with several Highland Ecuadorian dialects, CVS presents rising of unstressed mid vowels so that /e/ tends to be pronounced as [i], while /o/ may be realized as [u]. Such a phenomenon is also commonly encountered in other Spanish varieties in contact with Quechua and/or Aymara, Native American languages with a vowel system consisting of only three phonemes (/a/, /i/, /u/).

(3) a. Nusotru somos di Caldera.
'We are from Caldera.'

b. Pedru mi ha comptau un trago.
'Pedro bought a drink to me.'

c. Estuvi trabajando en casa
'I was working at home.'

This phenomenon is also encountered in another Afro-Hispanic language in contact with Andean Native languages, Afro-Bolivian Spanish, which is influenced by Aymara and is spoken in the Yungas Valleys, Province of La Paz (cf. Lipski 2008, 74; Sessarego 2011b, 46).

Paragogic vowels: CVS, in line with several Afro-Hispanic languages, but in contrast with the rest of Highland Ecuadorian varieties, presents instances of paragogic vowel insertion.

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(4) a. Ana se fue ayere con su esposo.
'Ana left yesterday with her husband.'

b. Encontré a mi mujere en la fiesta.
' I met my wife at the party.'

c. Una mujere y un hombre.
'A woman and a man.'

Paragogic vowels have been commonly reported for several other Afro-Hispanic and Afro-Lusitanian dialects; some examples are Afro-Bolivian Spanish (Lipski 2008, 73; Sessarego 2011b, 52), Afro-Mexican Spanish (Lipski 2007), and Angola-Portuguese (Vasconcellos 1901) to mention a few.

/s/ retention in coda position: In contrast with the majority of the Afro-Hispanic dialects, in CVS the segment /s/ in coda position is not weakened and deleted. Moreover, in line with surrounding Spanish dialects, /s/ in word-final position, when followed by a vowel, tends to be voiced and pronounced as [z].

(5) a. Comprame la[z] alitas de pollo.
'Buy the chicken wings for me.'

b. Lo[z] amigos di Marcelo están allá.
'Marcelo's friends are there.'

c. Henry tiene do[z] amiga má[z] altas que vos.
'Henry has two friends taller than you.'

Rhotic sounds: In line with several Afro-Hispanic languages (cf. Lipski 2008, 71for Afro-Bolivian Spanish; Megenney 1999, 74 for Barlovento Spanish; Aguirre Beltrán 1958, 208 for Afro-Mexican Cuijla Spanish), word-final /ɾ/ tends to be weakened and deleted in CVS (*amor* ⟶ *amó* 'love'; *dolor* ⟶ *doló* 'pain'); especially when occurring in infinitive verb forms (*tomar* ⟶ *tomá* 'to drink'; *cantar* ⟶ *cantá* 'to sing'; *ir* ⟶ *í* 'to go'). Furthermore, intervocalic /ɾ/ may be confused with /d/ (*toro* ⟶ *todo* 'bull'; *cada* ⟶ *cara* 'each').

Palatal sounds: CVS, similarly to other Andean Spanish dialects, maintains the phonemic distinction between the palatal sound /ʎ/ (written *ll*) and the phoneme /j/ (written *y*). Nevertheless, the allophonic realization of /ʎ/ is not [ʎ] as in the majority of the Peruvian and Bolivian dialects; rather, /ʎ/ is realized as a palatoalveolar fricative [ʒ] (Argüello 1978, 1980; cf. Lipski 1994, 248).

(6) a. Mataron ga[ʒ]ina el día di Navidá.
'They killed some hens on Christmas.'

b. ¿La [ʒ]ave de la casa? ¡En el cajón!
'The key house? In the drawer!'

c. El va[ʒ]e del Chota se [ʒ]ama.
'It is called Chota Valley.'

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On the other hand, the majority of the black dialects spoken in the Americas tend to be *yeísta*, thus they do not maintain a phonemic distinction between these two segments, which are generally be merged in /ʝ/.

/f/: The sound /f/ may be pronounced as [hʷ], especially if followed by /u/.

(7) a. Nosotros [hʷ]uimos [*fuimos*] al río.
'We went to the river.'

b. Decía que tenían que salir a[hʷ]uera [*afuera*].
'He said that they have to go outside.'

3.2 Morphosyntax

While the phonology of CVS resembles Highland Ecuadorian Spanish quite closely, the morphosyntactic patterns encountered in CVS differentiate this language quite remarkably from the surrounding dialects. At the same time, these grammatical features assimilate CVS to many other Afro-Hispanic vernaculars spoken in the Americas.

3.2.1 Noun Phrase

Number agreement: In contrast with standard Spanish, in CVS the feature 'number' is not marked redundantly across the noun phrase. In fact, number is conveyed only by determiners, while nouns and adjectives remain bare (cf. Lipski 2010). Plurality may be conveyed by the plural morpheme *-s* attached to possessives (8a), demonstratives (8b), definite (8c) and indefinite articles (8d), or by quantifiers (8e) and numerals (8f), which can convey plurality inherently, without recurring to plural morphology.

(8) a. Mis amigo ecuatoriano.
'My Ecuadorian friend.'

b. Esos amigo ecuatoriano.
'These Ecuadorian friend.'

c. Los amigo ecuatoriano.
'The Ecuadorian friend.'

d. Unos amigo ecuatoriano.
'Some Ecuadorian friend.'

e. Mucho amigo ecuatoriano.
'Many Ecuadorian friend.'

f. Cuatro amigo ecuatoriano.
'Four Ecuadorian friend.'

Similar cases of lack of number agreement are also found in a variety of Afro-Hispanic languages spoken in the Americas (cf. Ruíz García 2000, 77 for

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Chocó Spanish; Mayén 2007, 117 for Afro-Mexican Oaxaca Spanish; Delicado-Cantero & Sessarego 2011 for Afro-Bolivian Spanish).

Gender agreement: Cases of gender agreement mismatches are also common in CVS. The findings resulting from my fieldwork indicated that lack of gender agreement can affect the noun phrase elements variably. In particular, traditional CVS consistently presents gender agreement mismatches on strong quantifiers (9a) and post nominal adjectives (9b); while lack of agreement on weak quantifiers (9c), indefinite articles (9d), and pronominal adjectives (9e) may be found, but to a lesser extent.

(9) a. Todo la carne se han comido.
'They ate all the meat.'
b. Juana es una mujer simpático.
'Juana is a nice woman'
c. Mucho fiesta y mucho baile en Navidad.
'A lot of celebrations and a lot of dance in Christmas.'
d. Vivir en un ciudad como Quito es caro.
'Living in a city like Quito is expensive.'
e. Son dos buen persona.
'They are two good people.'

As in the case of number features, variable gender agreement is widely encountered in many Afro-Hispanic varieties (cf. Lipski 2008, 89for Afro-Bolivian Spanish; Álvarez Nazario 1974, 189 for Cuban Bozal Spanish; Ruíz García 2000, 77 for Chocó Spanish).

Bare Nouns: Differently from standard Spanish, in CVS nouns in object position can appear bare and take on a plural non-specific/generic reading.

(10) a. Mario quiere comprar galleta.
'Mario wants to buy cookies.'
b. Lorenzo come naranja.
'Lorenzo eat oranges.'

During my visit to Chota Valley, I did not discover cases of bare nouns in subject position; however, Lipski (2010, 32–33) was able to find some instances of this phenomenon in his own fieldwork.

(11) a. Porque [el] próximo pueblo puede ser Salinas.
'Because the next town could be Salinas.'
b. Pero [el] finado patrón Darío nos daba.
'But the late landowner Darío would give us . . . '

Similar cases of bare nouns have also been reported in a variety of other Afro-Hispanic languages of Latin America (cf. Gutiérrez-Rexach & Sessarego 2011

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for Afro-Bolivian Spanish; Schwegler 2007 for Palenquero; Kester & Schmitt 2007 for Papiamentu).

Pronouns: After visiting Chota Valley and conducting linguistic fieldwork, Schwegler (1996, 282) suggested that the grammatical element *ele* in CVS acts as a third person pronoun, like in Palenquero. Schwegler (1999) also indicates that CVS *ele* might be analyzed as a vestigial trace of an Afro-Portuguese creole, from which these two languages might have developed.

Lipski (2008), conversely, suggests that the Choteño speakers he interviewed do not seem to recognize this element as a pronoun; rather, they associate it with a common interjection used in Highland Ecuadorian Spanish to express «surprise, alarm, or other strong emotions» (Lipski 2008, 113). Lipski admits that in a few instances *ele* appears to act as a pronoun (12). However, he argues that these few examples are better analyzed as the result of a variable process of paragogic vowel insertion, a phenomenon that, as we saw, is encountered in CVS.

(12) a. Ele ya puso una escuela aquí.
'He put a school here.' (Lipski 2008, 113)

b. Cuando eli ya venía nusotro sabíamos estar sentado eli ya iba llegando teníamo que pararno, sacarse el sombrero.
'When he used to come we knew how to stay sit, he was coming we had to stop, take off the hat.' (Lipski 2008, 113)

My results are in line with Lipski's data and therefore support the paragogic vowel hypothesis. A closer analysis of the examples provided by Schwegler (1999, 244) appears to indicate that the real function of CVS *ele* is the one of a topic (and maybe also a focus) marker, rather than a pronoun (13).

(13) a. ELE, él ta alli. 'He, he is there.'

b. ¡Yo! ¡Con ELE no fuera! 'I! With him, I would not go!'

c. ELE el guagua se torció el pie. 'He, the kid twisted his ankle.'

d. ELE ese ya le canco al puerco.
'He, this one already killed the pig.'

e. ELE ellas se van a pasear.
'They, they are going for a walk.'

f. ELE no les quiero dar.
'To them, I do not want to give it to them.'

g. ELI los pescados se han muerto.
'They, the fish have died.'

All the examples provided in (13a–f) consist of cases of dislocated topics. In fact, in these constructions, *ELE* is always found at the left edge of the sentence and is probably followed by some sort of «comma intonation». In this way, *ELE* has the function of indicating that there is someone the speaker is going to

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make a statement about. This person (or group) must be salient in the context, maybe because he/she was previously mentioned. Examples (13a, c, d, e, f, g) were presented to my informants who confirmed the aforementioned analysis, thus confirming the topic properties of this element. Conversely, in example (13b), *ELE* seems to be the focus of the construction. In fact, it introduces new information that can be analyzed as the answer to a question. The question, in this case, could be: «Who wouldn't you go with?». The answer: *Yo, con ELE no fuera* 'As for me, it is with HIM that I would not go'. However, I have to admit that my informants did not have clear intuitions on this focalized construction; thus, they were not able to confirm the focalizing properties of this element. Therefore, I cannot present a full analysis of it. Regardless, this was the only example provided by Schwegler in which *ELE* is not clearly a topic marker. It would be interesting to see if the author has more data of this kind; this would allow us to better understand the syntactic and semantic properties of this element.

Overt subject pronouns appear to be used with a higher frequency in CVS than in most dialects of Spanish. This pattern aligns CVS with other Afro-Hispanic varieties, where a weaker use of inflectional morphology is often compensated by the employment of more overt pronouns. However, with exception of a few sporadic cases of subject-verb agreement mismatches, the CVS verbal conjugations are quite robust. These data may suggest that CVS used to have a poorer verbal morphology, which developed over time.

3.2.2 Verb Phrase

Subject-Verb Agreement: As I mentioned in the previous section, the verbal morphology of CVS closely resembles the one of standard Spanish. In fact, the only differences that I could find consist of a few cases of lack of subject-verb agreement, which are only sporadically heard in the speech of the eldest informants.

(14) a. Ellos dijo que iba al campo.
'They said they were going to the field.'

b. ¿Vos habla inglés?
'Do you speak English?'

c. Nosotros sacaba el agua con vaso medio roto.
'We took the water with a broken glass.'

Cases of subject-verb agreement mismatch are more commonly encountered in other present and past Afro-Hispanic dialects of the Americas, such as Afro-Puerto Rican (Álvarez Nazario 1974, 194–195) Afro-Peruvian Bozal Spanish (Lipski 2005, 253) and Afro-Bolivian Spanish (Lipski 2008, 108).

Due to regional Quichua influence, sometimes CVS speakers use gerundive constructions rather than conjugated forms (15). For the most part, black Choteños do not speak Quichua; these constructions should be seen as part of the popular Ecuadorian dialect spoken in the highland region.

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(15) a. Dame pasando el vaso.
'Pass me the glass.'
b. Dame sirviendo la comida.
'Serve me the food.'
c. Dame comprando unas espermitas.
'Buy me some candles.' (Lipski 1987, 170)

***Ser* and *Estar*:** Sometimes the use of *ser* and *estar* overlap and in some instances copulas can be omitted.

(16) a. Mi hijo es a Quito.
'My son is in Quito.'
b. Estamos seis en casa, con mi abuela siete.
'We are six at home, with my grandmother seven.'
c. Usted (es) joven.
'You are young.'

The same phenomena have been frequently reported in the literature on Afro-Hispanic langauges (cf. Álvarez Nazario 1974, 158 for Afro-Puerto Rican; Megenney 1999, 100 for Barlovento Spanish; Sessarego 2011b, 51 for Afro-Bolivian Spanish).

Focalizing *ser*: Focalizing *ser* is a CVS feature that deviates from standard Spanish.

(17) a. Este hombre vino es a pie.
'This man came walking.'
b. Unos se vestía es con falda.
'Some people used to wear a skirt.'
c. Yo soy es de Tumbabiro.
'I am from Tumbabiro.'

Such a focus marker is also encountered in the rest of the Ecuadorian highland and is quite common in certain Colombian dialects as well (cf. Méndez Vallejo 2009).

Reflexive *se*: Sometimes reflexive se is missing from contexts that would prescribe its use in standard Spanish.

(18) a. Esta persona llamaba Jesús.
'This person was called Jesús.'
b. Últimamente la gente está dicando a la agricultura.
'Lately people are working in the agricultural sector.' (Lipski 1982, 33)
c. Mi finado papá llamaba Ángel.
'My dear dad was called Ángel.' (Lipski 2008, 104)

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Similar cases have also been reported for other Afro-Hispanic languages. Some examples are Afro-Chocó Spanish (Ruíz García 2000, 83), Afro-Puerto Rican (Álvarez Nazario 1974, 195) and Afro-Bolivian Spanish (Lipski 2008, 111–117).

3.2.3 Prepositional Phrase

***Con*:** Prepositions in CVS are used in ways that significantly differ from standard Spanish. The preposition *con* may sometimes replace standard Spanish *de* (19); moreover, it occasionally substitutes the standard Spanish conjunction *y* (20).

(19) a. Hombre con [de] esta edad no tiene que trabajá.
'A man that old should not work.'
b. La mujer con [de] ojos verde tomó mucho.
'The green-eyed woman drank a lot.'

(20) a. Yuca con [y] arroz, eso se come mucho.
'Yuca and rice, this is a common dish.'
b. Yo con [y] él fuimos al mercado.
'I and he went to the market.'

***De*:** The preposition *de* oftentimes is omitted.

(21) a. Yo vivo lejos [de] las casita. 'I live far away from the little houses.'
b. Vino [de] Mascarilla andando.
'He came from Mascarilla walking.'

***A*:** At times *a* acts as a locative preposition (22), where *en* would be used in standard Spanish.

(22) a. Mi novio vive a Guayaquil.
'My boyfriend lives in Guayaquil.'
b. Estoy trabajando a otro campo.
'I'm working in another field.'

In all these respects, CVS parallels Afro-Bolivian Spanish perfectly (cf. Lipski 2008, 132; Sessarego 2011b, 55–57).

3.3 Lexicon

At the end of the sociolinguistic interviews, informants were asked to provide a list of words that they considered particularly relevant for the local Afro-Choteño identity. The current list offers an overview of some of these lexical items.

Aguado: lemon drink.

Agüelo: grandfather.

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Animero: local man who prays at the door of each family at night during the day of the death. He goes from house to house and the death spirits are supposed to follow him.

Bomba: 'bomb' traditional dance performed by women dancing with a bottle on their head.

Cabanuelas: rain calendar.

Cabuya: plant used to produce rope.

Cadejo: unit used to measure *cabuya*.

Champú: cold drink made of local herbs.

Chicha de arroz: typical drink made of rice.

Duende: local legend. A well-dressed man who goes on a horse the other way round. He appears at night. Women follow in love with him.

Espanto: disease that is caused by getting scared. It is cured with cocoa oil and pig fat.

Ganso de Caldera: goose from Caldera which is supposed to have curative powers.

Guacho: part of soil in which the seeds are placed.

Guandul: type of bean.

Huasca: whip.

Jorga: group of young people.

Limoncillo: typical drink made out of a local herb called *yerba Luisa*.

Míster: any foreign men.

Morocho: a kind of corn.

Muérgano: also called *bandido*, *pícaro*, and *zángano*, said of a man who has several women outside of his marriage.

Nigua: insect that enters into people's feet.

Padre sin cabeza: local legend. Headless priest; in Caldera, people claim to have seen him playing the church bells at night. In Concepción, he has been seen walking out of a coffin in the local cementery.

Peineta: adornment placed on women's head during special celebrations.

Pelota de tabla: game played with a ball and a piece of wood, similar to tennis.

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Picadillo: soup made of beans, green banana and yucca.

Séfiro: hard texture once used to make peons' clothes.

Taítas: parents, common Quichua word also used in other Highland varieties of Spanish.

Tuca: said of a fat woman.

Zango: typical dish made of corn.

¡Ve chapá!: old expression once used as 'look at that!'.

4 Discussion

The previous sections have offered an account of the main grammatical traits characterizing CVS. As far as the phonetics and phonology of this vernacular are concerned, we have observed that they do not differ significantly from the surrounding highland dialects. However, we also noticed that CVS share certain traits with other Afro-Hispanic languages, traits that are not found in this Ecuadorian region. In particular, we identified the presence of paragogic vowels, the elision of word-final /ɾ/ and the alternation of intervocalic /ɾ/ and /d/. The most consistent differences between CVS and Highland Ecuadorian Spanish are encountered at the morphosyntactic level, where the Choteño variety presents several grammatical phenomena traceable back to second language acquisition processes, widely encountered in many other Afro-Hispanic contact varieties (e.g., bare nouns, lack of gender and number agreement across the noun phrase, *ser* and *estar* alternation, etc.). Finally, also an overview of some of the most salient lexical items has been provided.

5 The status of CVS and potentials for further research

Present-day CVS shows phonological and morphological reductions, lexical borrowings, and some other traces of second language acquisition strategies, but lacks the radical grammatical restructuring found in creole languages such as Cape Verdean Creole (Baptista 2002), Sranan Tongo (Migge 2003), Palenquero (Schwegler 1996) or Haitian French (Lefebvre 1999), to mention a few. This is a fact agreed upon by all the linguists who worked on CVS. Conversely, scholars' opinions appear to diverge on CVS origin and evolution. In particular, it has been suggested that CVS might once have been an Afro-Portuguese creole which decreolized (Schwegler 1999), a missing Spanish creole (McWhorter 2000), and a crystallized second language variety of Spanish, which probably never went through a creolization phase (Sessarego 2011a). Far from deciding which sociohistorical scenario is the most accurate one, the current paper

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provides an updated account of CVS grammar. In doing so, the present study offers unedited data on this language and wants to stress the importance of conducting further research on CVS and other Afro-Hispanic dialects in order to shed new light on their so-far unclear origins.

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